

7/12/2006

**COMMENTS ON MINIMUM WAGE DURING DEBATE
ON THE CREDIT RATING AGENCY DUOPOLY RELIEF ACT
OF 2006**

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**HON. DAVID R. OBEY
OF WISCONSIN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JULY 12, 2006**

Mr. Speaker, we are being asked why we are raising the issue of the minimum wage on this legislation. The answer to that is very simple: The way this House works, absolutely nothing can be brought to the floor for a House vote unless

we have the permission of the majority party leadership to do so. And the fact is that for the last month they have been absolutely stonewalling every single effort to bring an increase in the minimum wage to this floor. So that is why we are raising this question on this rule.

This President and this Congress, this year, are going

to provide \$50 billion in tax cuts for people who make more than \$1 million a year. This year, the Congress has virtually voted to repeal the inheritance tax on the wealthiest 1 percent of people in this society. This year, the Congress has also voted to make further cuts in capital gains, a huge portion of which go to the wealthiest 10 percent of the people in this country. This year, the Congress is apparently willing to allow the cost-of-living

increase to go through for Members of Congress, but for those stuck at the bottom of our economy on the minimum wage, they are being told, ``sorry, suckers, you have got to wait for the ninth year in a row without an adjustment in your wages."

That is not right, it is not fair, and it is not moral.

The value of the minimum wage is at a 51-year low. The gap between the wealthiest 1 percent of people in this society and everybody else has never been broader than it is today. It is far worse than it is in merry olde England with its monarchy and its House of Lords and its House of Commons.

This economy is working fabulously well for the Shaquille

O'Neals of this society or the CEOs of our Fortune 500 corporations. They are making at least 200 times as much as the average workers do in this country. Under Jack Kennedy, that ratio was about 16 times as much. That shows you what has happened over the past generation.

A minimum-wage increase can help make this economy work

for everybody, not just those at the top of the ladder. It can help lift all boats, not just the yachts.

This Congress has had time to name dozens of post offices, it has found time to tell Terry Schiavo's family in Florida how to handle their own private business, but somehow the Republican leadership of this House can't find the time to

respond to the needs of people on life's underside.

It is about time we have a change in direction on that score in this country. It is about time we have a change of heart in this place. It is about time that we do something about the wage needs of the poorest people in this society. And that is why I would urge people to vote against the previous

question in protest to the
Republican leadership's
stonewalling of this issue.

